
Title: Codex Maleficarum volume IV

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THE
PATH
OF
SCREAMS
STAGE IV

COMMUNION WITH
THE ABSOLUTE

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No game lasts
forever. The
Infernalist might live
1000 years, but he
must eventually die.
Even the most
generous Patronus
will not grant true
immortality, and so
the Path of Screams
someday ends.

Damnation

Even the most
optimistic Infernalist
admits he could be
damned to eternal
torture for his sins.
He expected as much
going in, and the
possibility haunts
him during his
weaker moments.

Some diabolists grow up
without any concept of
hell or an Afterlife,
but most cultures have
unpleasant fates
reserved to those who
rebel against the gods.

To counter this
fear, our Fallen One
convinces himself
that he'll be rewarded
for good service and
that hell is a lie -
either it doesn't exist,
or it's meant for other
people. He also believes
that it'll be better than
life on Earth, and that
he can survive long
enough to bring on the
Reckoning and reap
the rewards of
Oblivion. As any
magus who's gone to
hells and returned can
attest, these are the
vain hopes. Still, the
Fallen One stakes his
future comfort on
them. Someday, he'll
learn the truth.

Few diabolists
survive long enough to
wonder. Many of
them go screaming into
damnation long before
they reach even the
shred of their
potential. The
Patronus arrives in a
cloud of brimstone and
thunder, and the
Infernalist spends his
last few moments
wondering if
everything he got was
worth the price he's
going to pay... if he
has time to wonder at
all. Although a lucky
Infernalist might be
adopted into the
demonic legions, he's
more likely to become
a howling fixture in
some Fallen angel's
realm. The true scope
of eternity is

impossible for a
 mortal to comprehend,
 but diabolists who
 ponder it sometimes
 try to atone for their
 sins before they
 experience eternety
 firsthand. Many
 never do, and go to Hell
 with a defiant snarl
 on their lips. Such
 folk continue to curse
 the gods even when
 they've been
 consigned to
 Otherwordly tortures,
 refusing to see the
 role their own choices
 played in their
 damnation.

Diabolists who
 admit that torture is
 forthcoming try to
 have as good time as
 possible in this life,
 and to extend it for as
 long possible. Some go
 out of their way to
 refine cruelty and
 indulgence to the
 extreme, while others
 make a point of taking
 as many people with
 them as they can. Both
 methods can backfire
 if the Fallen One
 meets a Patronus with
 a bent sense of humor;
 many an Infernalist
 has found a host of
 tormenters waiting
 for him when he
 reaches Hell -
 tormentors who used
 to be his victims.

Redemption and Salvation

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Is it possible for a devil to escape damnation? According to the doctrines of Gods, it is. Sincere repentance might allow even the most blackened soul to flee the gods' anger and rest in peace, if not blissfulness.

The Patronus will take pains to assure its "partner" that salvation is a lie, of course. The pact between them often contains a soul bound, but, as the demon will probably point out, a person who pisses in the faces of men and gods alike has earned a place in Hell, pact or no pact. Even so, some Infernalists seek absolution or penance before death. If a pact exists, the warlock might try any means to break the bargain; if that mean crawling on his knees back to God, so be it!

The Assumption

Other magi hope to attain the Zenith, to Ascend to some higher state where human chains slip away and the Absolute takes the magus upward. Dark wizards dream of the Absolute as well, but their vision of that Communion is very different indeed.

Early on, the Infernalist forges a link between the Void within and the Void without. As death approaches, many a warlock hopes to

re-enter the
Primordial Abyss.
Hopefully, he can
bring the rest of
the world down with
him as he goes; if not,
he can at least find
ressurance that
Creation's heart is cold
and black and empty-
much like his own.
Assumption, in this
case, could be
extinction or it could
be Descencion to the
Deep Lords of
Misrule, the fable
Ghost-Oracles of
metaphysical
Oblivion. No one who
reaches this level of
Assumption returns to
talk about it, although
many liars claim to
have joined the Deep
Lords in their infinite
domains.

Occasionally, the
Assumption
transforms the magus
into a lesser demon.
Having proven his
worth to Hell, he's
rewarded by a
permanent position
there. Many evil
spirits claim to have
been mortals, once,
and most Fallen magi
aspire to become
Fallen angels
someday.

Several sects claim
that vampirism is a
form of Assumption.
Burned by fears of
life and terrors of
Hell, our Infernalist
might try to join the
Undead. Supposedly
the vampiric Embrace
opens up a new vista
of experiences and
evils.

The ultimate
Assumption an
Infernalist craves,
however, is to become

one with the primal
emanations. To rejoin
the Darkness at the
beginning and end of
time, yet retain some
sense of the man he
once was, and enrich
the Absolute thereby.
This is the secret goal
that few outside magi
can grasp, the infinite
godhead said to wait at
the end of the Path.
Through Assumption,
he becomes Oblivion,
entropy, sadness -
and completeness. His
vision becomes
infinite, his touch,
eternal. He transcends
all boundaries of man
and god, and stretches
across the Void in
immortal ecstasy.

For without
Darkness, Light is
lost. Without pain,
pleasure is worthless.
What other magi see
as the Fall becomes, to
those who understand
it, completeness and
ultimate bliss.
Thus, the Screams go
on forever.